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IDOT KICKING OFF ONE OF THE LARGEST CLEAN AIR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN AMERICA ALONG THE RYAN AND KINGERY EXPRESSWAYS

*Environmental Strategy Making Illinois a National Leader in Pollution
Reduction on Highway Projects*

Chicago – Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Secretary Timothy W. Martin announced a major pollution reduction effort on the reconstruction of the Dan Ryan and Kingery Expressways. This groundbreaking initiative is a result of the recommendations from the Health and Environmental Focus Groups and partnerships with the U.S. and Illinois Environmental Protection Agencies, Chicago Public Schools, American Lung Association and local community agencies. The plan is designed to serve as a blueprint for maintaining the health and wellness of residents during road construction and reduce air emissions through IDOT's Clean Air Construction Initiative.

This is the first time any state or city agency has pulled together a volunteer focus group of independent experts to provide guidance and input on the health and environmental impacts of road construction.

"We take these environmental recommendations very seriously and we're acting on them," Secretary Martin said. "We want to make sure that residents affected by the Dan Ryan construction are safe and well-informed."

In addition, Secretary Martin announced that under a sweeping new Clean Air Construction Initiative undertaken by IDOT in the last year, most of the heavy construction equipment on the Dan Ryan project will either be retrofitted with devices designed to reduce harmful emissions or will use ultra low sulfur diesel fuel (ULSD) which is significantly cleaner than regular diesel fuel. IDOT has also instituted idling limits and dust controls in order to reduce construction-related air emissions.

The change means that approximately 290 pieces of equipment in use on the Dan Ryan project will have emissions control devices or will use ULSD fuel. These emission control strategies, which are now underway, are a contract requirement for equipment operating on the Dan Ryan project. The initiative is funded in part through a \$60,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that was secured by the Illinois EPA.

“Illinois EPA was pleased to partner with IDOT in designing and implementing a program to reduce and monitor potentially harmful air emissions,” said Illinois EPA Director Renee Cipriano. “It should be a national model for future major highway construction projects.”

In addition, IDOT has formed partnerships with key agencies to help educate the community about the construction project along with air and noise quality. These partnerships include:

- Working with 33 Chicago public elementary and high schools along the Dan Ryan construction project. At the elementary school level, engineering firms associated with the project will secure grants to assist the schools in purchasing science instructional materials. Engineers, scientists and other experts will regularly speak to students about the role math and science play in construction. IDOT has established a summer and year-round internship program for high school students.
- Working with KidCare agencies within the community to inform residents of opportunities for health care coverage in case a person needs to seek medical attention.

“It is wonderful that our students, who can view the construction from the windows of their classrooms, actually have an opportunity to learn from what they see,” said Arne Duncan, Chicago Public Schools chief executive officer.

The health and environmental focus group comprised of experts from local hospitals, health organizations and colleges and universities began meeting in June 2004 and has provided IDOT with recommendations that will ensure health and environmental concerns are met during the Dan Ryan construction. IDOT plans to use the report as a guide for all future construction and it is already serving as a model for other transportation agencies.

“Very soon, a project like this will be considered routine rather than innovative,” said U.S. EPA Region 5 Acting Administrator Bharat Mathur. “We congratulate IDOT for having the vision and the leadership to undertake such a project and we’re pleased that the EPA could provide both funding and technical assistance. It’s a great example of how partnerships generate exiting new ideas.”

Already, the Illinois Tollway has adopted IDOT’s Clean Air Construction Initiative and is mandating the use of either ULSD fuel or retrofit heavy construction equipment on the reconstruction and widening projects along the south Tri-State (I-80/294) and the Ronald

Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88), as well as on the construction of the I-355 South Extension.

“This is an initiative for the metropolitan region,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Jack Hartman. “As the Tollway moves forward with its \$5.3 billion Congestion-Relief Plan, we are presented with an opportunity to advance these important air quality improvement initiatives.”

The Tollway will continue to work with IDOT, IEPA and the USEPA to evaluate additional opportunities to improve construction methods and minimize impacts. The intent is to make these initiatives standard operating procedures in densely populated areas where air quality and health issues are a concern.

Two key recommendations from the focus group include:

- Installation of devices to monitor air quality along the Dan Ryan construction zone—monitoring devices have already been installed at six public elementary schools, a park district site and a public housing facility in September. The devices will monitor air quality prior to, during and after construction.
- A citywide education campaign communicating results and construction progress to area residents, which will include regular updates through newsletters, brochures, informational sessions and a hotline for people with questions regarding the project.

As part of the campaign, IDOT created *Dan the Air Bear* who will be placed along the Dan Ryan construction route to report daily air quality as good (Green Day), moderate (Yellow Day), unhealthy for sensitive groups (Orange Day) or unhealthy (Red Day).

“We are glad to have been part of the process that led IDOT to adopt a proactive strategy for cleaning the air and improving lung health in the entire Chicago region,” said Brian Urbaszewski, Director of Environmental Health Programs for the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago and a focus group member. “Reducing diesel emissions on IDOT projects will help reduce asthma attacks precisely in areas where asthma rates are among the highest in the nation.”

According to traffic studies, the Dan Ryan expressway is one of the busiest and most dangerous in the nation. It carries more than 300,000 vehicles daily, which is more than double what it was intended to carry when it was built more than 40 years ago. With nearly 8,200 accidents and more than 25 deaths reported over a three-year period, the expressway is averaging approximately seven accidents daily.

The four-year \$600 million Dan Ryan Expressway (I-94/90) Reconstruction project spans from 31st street to I-57/Halsted street. As part of the reconstruction, IDOT will add expressway lanes, improve local access roads and reconfigure the Skyway interchange to allow for safer driving conditions. We’re On the Move to improve the Dan Ryan expressway. For more information, visit www.danryanexpressway.com.

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